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**LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO INCREASE ADULT ACCESS TO
LIFE-SAVING VACCINES**

WASHINGTON, DC — Today Rep. Waxman, Sen. Kennedy, and Rep Roybal-Allard introduced a package of bills that will help to ensure that adults have access to life-saving vaccines. These vaccines include the new vaccine against the virus that causes cervical cancer as well as vaccines against seasonal influenza, certain pneumonias, Hepatitis B, and shingles, among others.

These bills will increase access to vaccines by creating a Vaccines for Uninsured Adults program, modeled on the very successful Vaccines for Children (VFC) program. The Vaccines for Uninsured Adults program will provide vaccines free of charge to uninsured and underinsured adults. The bills would fund programs to educate the public about the importance of adult immunization and would provide for grants to states to strengthen state adult immunization efforts as well.

The legislation would further facilitate immunization of older Americans by moving vaccines from Medicare Part D to Medicare Part B, which would allow for doctors to be paid to administer the vaccines. In addition, the legislation would require the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to study ways they can encourage both adult and health care worker immunization.

“This package of legislation represents a major policy initiative to improve adult immunization rates,” said Rep. Waxman. “We know that immunizations save lives. Unfortunately, not enough adults are getting their recommended vaccines. What we are proposing today is a comprehensive approach to boost immunization rates and to improve the Nation’s health.”

“Vaccination is obviously indispensable in the battle against many diseases,” said Sen. Kennedy. “It protects children and adults alike, yet it’s not reaching all those who need it. The CDC estimates that more than 42,000 adults die every year from vaccine-preventable diseases. Fewer than 30% of adults at high-risk for influenza actually receive the vaccine. As new vaccines become available against more diseases, we need to do more to see that uninsured and under-insured adults and children will benefit from these medical advances. Under the bills we are introducing today, many more adults and children in communities across America will have access to these life-saving discoveries, and the nation as a whole will be better prepared to avoid or reduce the threat of a pandemic.”

“It has been my pleasure to work with Congressman Waxman and Senator Kennedy, who have devoted their years in public service to ensuring that all Americans have access to

quality health care,” said Rep. Roybal-Allard. “This group of immunization bills is a key component of that effort. We are fortunate to have highly effective vaccines that will prevent death and disability and save billions of dollars in health costs annually, but they can't work unless we take decisive steps to ensure their universal availability and utilization.”

The bills would also help the nation with a vaccine shortage by requiring vaccine companies to give the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) one year's notice, when feasible, of their plans to stop manufacturing a particular vaccine. In addition, the measures would give HHS the authority to keep track of doses of vaccines in times of shortage. Shortages can occur for many reasons and are often unpredictable, such as the manufacturing problem reported this week by Merck & Company that will likely result in a shortage of pediatric meningitis and pneumonia vaccines.

Finally, the bills would improve the VFC by allowing underinsured children who qualify for VFC to get immunized at any public health clinic

A text of the bills and summaries are available at www.oversight.house.gov.